

Assignment: Qualitative Critique

The Youth Lens Study is a research article that surveyed 65 children and youth experiences during and after the global SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic in Cleveland, Ohio. The authors described Cleveland, OH as a highly populated urban city with 34 designated neighborhoods—a diverse geographic location with historic infrastructure, however, historically, Cleveland also faced structural racism challenges which directly enabled racial segregation amongst the neighborhoods (Benninger et al.).

The main issue in the *Youth Lens: Youth Perspectives on the COVID-19 Pandemic and its Impact on Well-being in an Urban Community* is the exclusion of youth when developing and implementing various pandemic strategies and policies, especially because the children and youth were directly impacted by them. I believe the authors organized the article well, listing the headings clearly and concisely, supporting the flow of the article. It is a standard journal article as described by Harris (2022) and included findings of empirical social science research. The headings of the article included an introduction, background of the COVID-19 pandemic and inequities, background on the region of Cleveland, OH, a literature review, research methods, information on the participants, sampling, data analysis, findings, study themes and subthemes, and recommendations by the youth. The study did a good job of helping me understand the complexities of children and youth, whose age ranged between 10-18, and who navigated the COVID-19 pandemic. It was evident through their research via specific quotes from the youth that the pandemic affected them all very differently and in all areas of their lives. When I reflect on the COVID-19 pandemic, four years later, it still has a negative connotation, however, this study demonstrated how it became a positive experience for some youth. Overall, I believe the authors make a compelling case for the reader about this topic because everyone who lived

through the COVID-19 pandemic can relate in one way or another and was affected in one way or another. This study is important for a few reasons: it proved actual cases and experiences by the youth of how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their well-being, mental health and physical health, safety and coping, flourishing, and resilience. And it emphasized the need for child-centered policies based on participants' input.

The literature used in this study was intersectionality in children's well-being theories. The theories used explored how the youth position themselves by their social identities and how they influenced their psycho-social and physical well-being outcomes during the pandemic. In reading the literature review, I found it to be credible, interesting and relevant.

The study employed a qualitative methodology with a participatory methodological framework, meaning that the children and youth became research partners. The study also established a Youth Advisory Board which provided opportunities for the youth to guide the study design and provide recommendations. The Youth Advisory Board consisted of youth and co-researchers who assisted with the data collection analysis for the duration of the study, which lasted from 2020 through 2022. Based on the study's participant recruitment strategy, and their approach to ensure a diverse ethnic group of youth, (Black, White, Southeast Asian, Latinx, and Multiracial) the authors were strategic and sensitive to the needs of the participants. I believe that the authors demonstrated ethical practices toward the participants and structured the questions and activities appropriately. The authors research methods, clear and easy to read and understand. Additionally, the key concepts in the article were well-defined (well-being, children, youth, flourishing, COVID-19, and intersectionality) and the terminology and language used was easy to understand.

The findings presented in the article were clearly stated and they included the most challenging factors that the participants endured during the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors underscored the importance of understanding the interconnected categories and subcategories of social policies, mental and physical health, safety, and coping and flourishing. Additionally, factors such as school and learning, social isolation, and self-identity were all themes that were interrelated to how the youth experienced the COVID-19 pandemic. I believe the authors communicated well how social policies and mitigation interventions created and facilitated by adults should have included youth in those conversations.

My opinion on the authors perspective was both Political and Normative. There was a gap between the holistic needs of the youth in the region and the services offered, if any, and an urgency to listen to the youth and formulate policies to support them during the pandemic, across settings and environments. Specifically, in the section “Social Policies and Children’s Well-being” it was difficult for me to not *feel* the struggles that these kids faced, whether it was something that happened to them at school, at home, or internally during the pandemic. The authors position on this topic was something of an emotional attachment, in other words, questioning if the parents, administrators, and policymakers even thought to include the youth during the policy-making process. The authors political perspective was the urgent need to include the youth and contribution to future policymaking and find potential ways to address the youth’s challenges and concerns. Overall, the article was engaging, and I enjoyed it a lot. Perhaps because I experienced the COVID-19 pandemic as a single mother of 2 teenagers, and I was also the “foster parent” to my little sister who was 17 during the pandemic. Although I was able to relate to this study and found it interesting, I reviewed this article from a scholarly perspective and did my best to “see-through factual claims” in the study (Harris, 2022).

References

- Benninger, E., Schmidt-Sane, M., & Hajski, A. (2022). Youth Lens: Youth Perspectives on the COVID-19 Pandemic and its Impact on Well-being in an Urban Community. *International journal on child maltreatment : research, policy and practice*, 1–26. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42448-022-00130-z>
- Harris, S. R. (2014). *How to critique journal articles in the social sciences*. Sage.